



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

Governor Cuomo and Senator Lanza Announce Relief for Staten Island Toll Payers

ANDREW J LANZA February 6, 2014



Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and Senator Andrew Lanza today announced an agreement to fund significant toll relief for Staten Island residents and commercial vehicles using the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. The toll relief lowers the effective cost of crossing the bridge to \$5.50 for Staten Island residents in non-commercial vehicles, and also reduces tolls by 20 percent for commercial vehicles which make more than 10 trips over the bridge per month.

“The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge is a lifeline for Staten Island – for its residents, for its neighbors, for its businesses and for its economy,” Governor Cuomo said. “This toll relief will allow Staten Islanders to keep more of their money on the island and will make a real difference for companies that rely on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge to keep their business thriving.”

Senate Majority Coalition Co-Leader Dean Skelos said, “The Verrazano Bridge is a critical transportation artery for Staten Island, but its tolls have been too high for far too long. This toll relief is a welcome change that will benefit the many residents and businesses that regularly commute to and from the Island, and it would not have happened if not for the tireless work of Senator Lanza. I appreciate the Governor's support for bringing this positive change, and for partnering with us on a bipartisan basis to reduce the cost of living and working on Staten Island.”

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver said, “The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge is a critical link between Staten Island and Brooklyn for the nearly 200,000 who travel across each day. It is a major connection to our interstate highway system. The cost of tolls is yet another hardship for working families and small business owners. I would like to acknowledge the tireless work of Assembly members Michael Cusick and Matthew Titone who have fought on behalf of the residents of Staten Island to ease this burden. I thank Governor Cuomo and the Senate for their commitment to this important agreement.”

Senator Andrew Lanza said, “At a time when the price of most things seem to be going up, Governor Cuomo has stepped up in partnership with the Senate and the Assembly to deliver historic Verrazano Bridge toll relief. Governor Cuomo has once again proven that he understands the plight of Staten Islanders to make ends meet and has taken real action by reducing the Verrazano toll for Staten Island families and businesses. The cost for residents will now, adjusted for inflation, be lower than it was in 1972. This discount program will put approximately \$14 million dollars back into the pockets of Staten Island families and businesses and I applaud Governor Cuomo for delivering this great news.”

Assemblyman Michael Cusick said, “This discount plan will benefit both Staten Island residents and businesses. As the highest tolled county in the entire nation, lowering our resident discount to \$5.50 and providing a significant discount for commercial vehicles will put money back in the pockets of Staten Islanders. This announcement is a great step for Staten Island and I commend Governor Cuomo for working to provide much needed toll relief. This plan has come to reality under the dedication and leadership of Governor Cuomo with the support of Speaker Shelly Silver and Senate Majority Leader, Dean Skelos.”

Senator Diane Savino said, “Thanks to the leadership of Governor Cuomo, we are delivering toll relief that will make a real difference in the lives of Staten Island’s residents and the operations of the local business community. This is an issue that has been important to our community for a long time, and working in partnership with the Governor, we are lowering the costs of traveling into Staten Island on the Verrazano. This is truly great news for our community.”

Assemblyman Matthew Titone said, “The Governor’s announcement today is a major victory for our community. The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge is a critical channel that Staten Island’s residents and businesses use every day, often several times a day, and the tolls have become increasingly difficult to afford. This toll relief plan will help businesses

to cut costs so they can grow and put more money back into the pockets of families. I thank the Governor for delivering this much-needed relief, and I would also like to thank my colleagues Senator Lanza and Assemblyman Cusick for their efforts as well.”

Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis said, “This is a tremendous victory for the residents and businesses of our community, who have struggled through toll increase after toll increase. We have made the arguments time and again that, as an island with limited transportation options, the rising burden of connecting to the rest of the city was becoming too much to bear. Finally someone listened, understood, and worked with us, and we are very thankful.”

Staten Island Borough President James Oddo said, “Staten Islanders have grown beyond weary watching tolls continue to rise. For this reason, the notion of tolls coming down might take a while to fully grasp. But after a few moments, beleaguered residents and small business owners trying to survive will all be grateful for this step toward fairness. All Staten Islanders should appreciate that our Governor, Andrew Cuomo, made this happen, and that Senator Lanza and Assemblyman Cusick didn't stop working until it was accomplished.”

Linda Barran, President & CEO, Staten Island Chamber of Commerce, said, “This deal goes a long way towards providing real toll relief to Staten Islanders, and I would like to personally thank Governor Cuomo, Senator Lanza, and Assemblyman Cusick for working diligently to get it done. For a long time, businesses on Staten Island felt isolated and removed from the rest of our State, and this deal finally provides a mechanism for them to become more competitive and profitable. Today’s announcement is a great step for jobs, business, and the entire Staten Island economy.”

Under the agreement reached by Governor Cuomo and the Legislature, Staten Island residents enrolled in the E-ZPass resident discount program will pay \$5.50 for each tolled crossing of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. This is a significant discount from current toll rates for Staten Island residents, who now pay \$6.36 per toll for one or two crossings in a month and \$6.00 per trip for three or more crossings per month. The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge only charges tolls in the Staten Island-bound direction, so no toll is collected for drivers heading to Brooklyn.

In addition, discounts will be available to commercial vehicles, which have New York Customer Service Center E-ZPass accounts with more than 10 trips per month across the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. Those vehicles will have their tolls discounted 20 percent that month, as listed in this chart:

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| 2 axle | Current: \$19.24 | Discounted: \$15.43 |
| 3 axle | Current: \$31.52 | Discounted: \$25.29 |
| 4 axle | Current: \$40.28 | Discounted: \$32.31 |
| 5 axle | Current: \$52.52 | Discounted: \$42.13 |
| 6 axle | Current: \$61.28 | Discounted: \$49.16 |
| 7 axle | Current: \$73.52 | Discounted: \$58.98 |

The toll relief plan must be reviewed by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Board, which is scheduled to consider the proposal at its February 26 meeting. The proposal must also undergo an environmental review and a reprogramming of the E-ZPass system, which will take three to five months. If approved, it is anticipated that Staten Islanders would be eligible for toll relief effective April 1, 2014. The toll relief will be funded by a \$7 million allocation in the state budget and \$7 million from the MTA. If funding for the program is eliminated, the toll relief will end and Staten Island residents and commercial vehicles will pay the applicable toll rates.

All drivers can save time and money at the seven bridges and two tunnels operated by MTA Bridges and Tunnels by using an E-ZPass issued by the New York Customer Service Center, which offers substantial discounts on the cash toll rate. For Staten Island residents who enroll in the resident discount program, the discounts are even larger. More than 91 percent of New York Customer Service Center E-ZPass accounts with Staten Island addresses are enrolled in the resident discount program.

The current passenger car toll over the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge for non-Staten Island residents is \$15 in cash, or \$10.66 when paid with an E-ZPass issued by the New York Customer Service Center. For trucks, the base cash toll on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge is \$30, or \$19.24 when paid with an E-ZPass issued by the New York Customer Service Center, with rates rising for each additional axle.

Built in 1964 with a span of 9,865 feet, the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge is the longest suspension bridge in North America and carries approximately 183,000 vehicles on an average weekday. Almost 87 percent of drivers crossing the bridge use E-ZPass.

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